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OUR TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

The anniversary celebrated on March 12th brought to the meeting at Huntington Hall and to the luncheon assembly at the Brunswick a note of friendliness and a coöperative willingness that was marked even for our Association, noted as it has always been for these insinuating graces.

We shall not soon forget the valuable suggestions on the Project Method, so helpfully analyzed by Professor Henry W. Holmes and so well illustrated in a concrete way by Miss Nichols, Dr. Gaston, and Miss Dawes.

In the after-dinner meeting Mr. George H. Browne created the tone and skillfully directed the spirit of the program. The printed summary so painstakingly prepared by him graphically reveals the activities of our Association during the past twenty years. It is an imposing record, conspicuous for its comprehensiveness and variety and inspirational urge.

All of us were delighted to hear from those who were responsible for the success of our Association in the earlier years—from Mr. Ramsey, who issued the first call; from Professor Damon, who spoke at the first meeting, in February 1901; from Dr. D. O. S. Lowell and Miss Katherine H. Shute, who have been our guides, philosophers, and friends for a score of years; from our retiring president, Professor Aydelotte; from Mr. Thurber, who gracefully presented to Mr. Browne the gift that symbolizes the appreciation we all feel for the devoted service of our former secretary-treasurer-editor-president and director-general.

After a word of prophecy from the present editor, the meeting was brought to a fitting close by a most delightfully analytical address by Dr. Samuel McChord Crothers, who spoke on Our New Poetry and whimsically revealed its peculiar fashion.

At the business meeting the Association elected the following officers: President, Katherine H. Shute of the Boston Normal School; vice-president, Kenneth G. T. Webster of Harvard University; secretary-treasurer, A. B. de Mille of Milton Academy; editor, Charles Swain Thomas of Harvard University and the Atlantic Monthly Press; executive committee, Elizabeth A. Dike of the Winsor School, Sally F. Dawes of the Quincy High School, Orren H. Smith of Girls' High School, Boston, Ralph P. Boas of the Central High School, Springfield, and Dr. Percy W. Long of the Department of University Extension, Massachusetts Board of Education.

A PLAN FOR VERSE-MAKING IN THE NINTH YEAR*

By LUCY H. CHAPMAN

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EVERYONE realizes that rhythm and rime cast a very real spell over children. Who as a child has not been fascinated by Mother Goose with its vibrant rhythm and jingling rime? How glibly we chanted the varied counting-out incantations. With what malicious glee we sang the verses devised for the torment of our fellows. He who could call forth from his traditional background a new jingle or concoct a variation of one already known was indeed "king for a day."

Yet in spite of all this, boys and girls readily accept a prejudice against poetry. "A story is a story," they say. "Why put it into poetry?" They compare *The Lady of the Lake* unfavorably with *Ivanhoe*. At the same time how eagerly they seize upon the limerick, the school song, and the team yell. Here they feel unobscured their keen pleasure in rhythm and rime. In *The Lady of the Lake* it is not the poetry that dulls interest; it is the baffling condensation of thought and a vocabulary necessitating constant dictionary reference. In this poem children must work for what they get, and some find the story not worth the effort. They blame the poetry for all their difficulties, and too often poetry becomes to them synonymous with mere obscurity. This plan for teaching verse-making was conceived as a means of bringing back to the child his original joy in verse *per se*; of making him feel at home with poetry as he is at home with the short story; and of awakening interest that will affect his leisure reading.

Of course a teacher should adapt any such plan to her own personality. She can use most effectively those models that she herself enjoys. In poetry, especially, the mood, the spirit, is all-important. She must give her pupils that appreciation that prepares for and inspires creative effort. Real joy in literature is an emotional experience that spurs the creative impulse. Jingles can, of course, be produced

* Thanks are due Miss Mary Greenwood and Miss Elizabeth Dame for many practical suggestions.

mechanically, but the beauty of children's effort lies in the naïve charm of original and often deeply spiritual fancies. Only in an atmosphere of sincere feeling will these things of the spirit see the light.

When teacher and pupils feel sincere emotional response to some poem, the moment for creative suggestion has come. This suggestion must be definite enough really to start the less imaginative without in any way hampering the more gifted. At the outset we have found it helpful to let some rhythm begin singing itself through our minds before starting. Sometimes children will begin by suggesting orally good first lines. When this happens, we comment, scan, show flaws, or applaud; then everyone begins his individual effort. In many classes some such little warming-up helps. As the teacher goes about the room, she may, if the children are making ballads, for instance, scan aloud a good line here, another there, until the rhythm has become pervasive. Again the stillness in which nothing disturbs each child's reverie will be essential to real expression. The method must depend wholly upon the class, the teacher, and the mood of the poetry. If, however, the teacher takes pleasure in this work, the children will reassociate poetry with enjoyment, and oftener than she anticipates, perhaps, will produce really delightful bits of poetic expression. The following outline merely gives a series of definite suggestions in which teachers may find material that will be useful in their own plans.

OUTLINE LESSONS FOR THE FIRST HALF

LESSON 1.

Purpose: To develop the principle of rhythm.

A. Read two or three lines of poetry having a simple rhythm, as *The Lady of the Lake*. Read in contrast a prose paraphrase. Lead pupils to discover in rhythm a fundamental characteristic of poetry.

B. Write on the board a line of poetry in which the sense emphasis coincides with the metrical stress. Show how a simple rhythm, as iambic four, is produced. Scan in unison several lines.

Assignment: Mark very simply the accented syllables in ten lines of *The Lady of the Lake*.

LESSON 2.

Purpose: To develop the principle of rime.

A. Review rhythm by letting pupils scan the lines they have marked.

B. Call attention to the rime in the lines. Let the children make lists of rimes for words of different vowel sounds.

C. Describe and illustrate such common stanzaic forms as the couplet and the quatrain.

Assignment: Bring in examples of different rhyme plans.

LESSON 3.

Purpose: To find what constitutes poetic expression.

A. In review of preceding lessons, discuss the stanzas brought in by the children.

B. By illustrations develop the idea of simile and metaphor.

C. Bring out through pupil discussion two requisites for poetic expression:

1. The comparison must make the image more vivid.

2. The comparison must be in itself beautiful.

Assignment: Bring in the most pleasing similes or metaphors for three such ideas as a child dancing, rain falling, wind blowing. Let any pupil who wishes develop one comparison in verse.

LESSON 4.

Purpose: To continue the preceding lesson, teaching personification.

A. Discuss from the point of view of vividness and beauty the comparisons that the children have brought in.

B. Read Stevenson's *The Wind* (1). Bring out the idea of personification in talking to an inanimate thing. Now read in contrast the first stanza of Shelley's *The Cloud* (1).

LESSON 5.

Purpose: To intensify the feeling for rhythm.

Write on the board the words of some song familiar to the class. (Correlate with the work of the music teacher.) Have children sing this song noticing where the stress falls. Rouse interest in a school song that might be set to this music. Discuss suitable ideas and possible refrains.

Assignment: Write a school song to this music. Test the song by singing it before coming to class.

LESSON 6. (Preparatory work.)

Give much drill in sentence variation, as inversion, changes in the placing of modifiers, and changes from declarative to exclamatory form. Have a short theme written giving vividly the climax of a race of some sort.

Purpose: To show the relation between rhythm and action.

A. Read to the class a poem with a rhythm suggesting the sound of horses' hoofs, as Browning's *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix* (2), Kipling's *Ballad of the East and West* (2), Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* or perhaps Cowper's *The Diverting Ride of John Gilpin* (1). Make the children feel the effect of the rhythm in suggesting action.

B. Analyse the metre very simply.

C. Have children suggest lines in the same metre that might begin a poem describing a race such as they described in the prose theme above.

Assignment: Write the verses.

LESSON 7.

Purpose: To suggest action or motion by the sound of the words used.

A. Read *The Tinker's Chorus* from *Robin Hood*, or *Angetina Tuva*, the seal hunter's song found in Kipling's *Second Jungle Book*.

B. Discuss the effect of sound words in making us live in the experiences of the song. Have pupils suggest others who might sing songs of their work.

C. Read Stewart Edward White's description of logging from *The Riverman* or some other vigorous prose description of a special sort of work.

D. Let each pupil select the worker whose song he will choose to sing. Have each think of sound words suggestive of his theme.

Assignment: Write the song.

LESSON 8.

Purpose: To suggest through rhythm and sound the feeling that something in nature gives.

A. Read Barry Cornwall's *The Sea* (1) or *The Angler's Invitation* (1) by Thomas Tod Stoddart. Follow this by the pupil poem beginning, "I wish I were a bullfrog" published in Edward H. Webster's pamphlet *Verse Making*.

B. Suggest a wishing song in which the children shall make readers feel their mood by means of the rhythm and the sound words used. Be sure that each child has in mind a metre suited to his theme and appropriate sound words before beginning his verses.

LESSON 9.

Purpose: To teach the ballad.

A. Recall *The Ballad of Alice Brand*, which has been read in *The Lady of the Lake*. Draw attention to the rime plan and to the repeated line as ballad characteristics. Now read one of the Robin Hood ballads or *Sir Patrick Spens*.

B. Have children suggest incidents from *The Lady of the Lake* that might be developed as ballads, especially incidents that have not been fully narrated by Scott, as Ellen's journey to the lowlands. Have numerous beginning lines for such a ballad suggested in class. Discuss possible recurring lines.

Assignment: Write an original ballad.

LESSON 10.

Purpose: To write a poem of adventure.

A. Read Joaquin Miller's *Columbus* (1), Alfred Noyes's *A Knight of the Ocean* (3), or William Howitt's *The Northern Seas* (1).

B. Start the children discussing modern adventures. Read one of the vividly told incidents in Sir Ernest Shackleton's *South*. Make sure that everyone feels the courage and devotion of the rescuers in making that hazardous trip to save their fellows. Now plan the arrangement of a poem that shall tell this or a similar story. If the ballad form is chosen, have the pupils suggest good recurring lines.

Assignment: Write the ballad.

OUTLINE LESSONS FOR THE SECOND HALF

LESSON 1.

Purpose: To review rime and rhythm.

A. Read one stanza of *A Sea-Song* by Allan Cunningham. Discuss the means by which the writer has made us feel his mood. Read in contrast *Drifting* by Thomas Buchanan Read. Discuss the effect of different rhythms. Teach *iambus* and its reverse, *trochee*; *anapest* and its reverse, *dactyl*.

B. Referring to the models just read, consider the effect of close riming.

Assignment: Bring into class a poem that for some reason appeals to the one who selects it. Be prepared to give orally in one minute interesting characteristics of the poem selected.

LESSON 2.

Purpose: To review simile and metaphor.

A. Have several oral themes discussing the characteristic of poems selected by pupils.

B. Read Tennyson's *The Eagle* (2). Study the use of simile and metaphor in this poem. Let children discover the image in "The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls."

Assignment: Bring into class at least two famous comparisons. Be able to tell why they are effective.

LESSON 3.

Purpose: To review personification.

A. Discuss the similes and metaphors brought in by pupils.

B. Read Joyce Kilmer's *Trees*. Contrast the attitude of the writer with that of Tennyson in *The Brook*.

C. Study *The Brook* in greater detail. Let pupils imagine the details of a poem on this same plan personifying a cloud, a hill, a flower, or some other familiar object.

Assignment: Write verses in imitation of Tennyson's *The Brook*.

LESSON 4.

Purpose: To increase the pupil's facility in versification.

A. Use a familiar song or a simple poem, such as Thomas Hood's *I Remember, I Remember* or Elizabeth Turner's *Politeness*. Suggest humorous parodies.

Assignment: Write a parody.

LESSON 5.

Purpose: To represent in verse some sound.

A. Read Van Dyke's *The Angler's Reveille* (1), Tennyson's *The Thristle*, or Southey's *The Cataract of Lodore* (1).

B. Discuss other sounds, as rain, the cicada's cry, the wind, which is represented by verse.

Assignment: Write verses imitating some familiar sound.

LESSON 6.

Purpose: To represent motion in verse.

A. Read Henry Charles Beeching's *Going Down Hill on a Bicycle* (1) or Swinburne's *Swimming* (1). Discover how the writers have given the effect of motion.

B. Consider familiar scenes that are full of motion. Have children suggest as many as possible, as children jumping rope or skating, birds flying, airplanes at a distance.

C. Have children consider whether they will represent motion seen as an on-looker or felt as an actor. Discuss means of suggesting the motion in each case, the rhythm to be used, and the suitable motion words.

Assignment: Write a set of verses suggesting motion.

LESSON 7.

Purpose: To represent color in verse.

A. Read *October's Bright Blue Weather* (1) by H. H. or *July* by Susan Hartley Swett. Now read Henley's *Made in Hot Weather* (1). Note the senses to which each writer appeals.

B. Consider the colors suggested by different seasons. Discover what image comes to each mind when the one word *red*, *violet*, *scarlet* or *purple* is spoken. Find which of these images have poetic value.

Assignment: Write a set of verses in which color predominates.

LESSON 8.

Purpose: To give a vivid impression of some time or place.

A. Read selected pupil verses illustrating different methods of producing vivid effects. Review the effect of different rhythms and of frequent and infrequent rime.

B. Read Scott's *Hunting Song* (2). Question the class as to the kind of day and the mood of the writer. Note why this metre is unsuited to a quiet, dreamy day. Discuss the impression and the corresponding metre for such occasions as circus day, Fourth of July, Christmas, Thanksgiving, the last day of school.

Assignment: Write a set of verses giving the impression of a certain day or place. Make an appeal to as many senses as possible.

LESSON 9.

Purpose: To write a fanciful poem.

A. Read Vachel Lindsay's *The Potato Dance* (4), Edward Lear's *The Jumbles* (2), or Lewis Carroll's *The Oyster and the Carpenter* (1).

B. Lead the class to talk of the sort of stories they used to enjoy. Consider what fairy stories, fables, or myths might be turned into fanciful verse that would amuse younger children.

Assignment: Write a set of verses for some younger brother, sister, or friend.

LESSON 10.

Purpose: To write a serious, patriotic poem.

A. Read Van Dyke's *The Name of France* (5). Study the poem to make sure that children understand the allusions. Call attention to the fact that this poem in honor of France was written by an American

during the war. Now read *Liberty Enlightening the World* by the same author. Discuss the reason for his feeling as he did about America. Get the children to talking about what America means to them or to their fathers and mothers. If desired use *I am an American* (6).

B. Suggest a poem following the stanzaic form of *The Name of France*, but substituting "America" as the refrain.

Assignment: Write the poem.

References are made to the following collections of poems:

- (1) *Golden Numbers* edited by Kate Douglas Wiggin
- (2) *British Verse for Boys* edited by Daniel V. Thompson
- (3) *Tales of the Mermaid Tavern* by Alfred Noyes (The song about Sir Humphrey Gilbert is found in the first section.)
- (4) *The Chinese Nightingale* by Vachel Lindsay
- (5) *A Treasury of War Poetry* edited by George Herbert Clarke (first series)
- (6) *The Spirit of Democracy* edited by Powell

While a definite sequence holds throughout these lessons, they are intended to be interspersed with other composition. They are also intended to be used as a point of departure rather than as a prescribed course. Children should be allowed the utmost freedom in choice and in treatment of any subject. The following stanzas are a sample of the un-revised work of a ninth year pupil in response to lesson 7 in the first half.

LESSON 8.

THE FIRST CIRCUS

Down the street the horses come,
Tramping in the blazing sun;
The girls they shout,
The boys they cheer,
For this is the first to come this year.

It is the circus grand and gay
And it has come a long, long way
To show the girls,
To show the boys,
And fill the town with all its joys.

Gladys Vevier, age 13.

ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO WRITE POETRY

J. GRACE WALKER

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THIS is not an essay nor a pedagogical treatise, but just a description of the approach to verse writing my sophomore classes make every year and of the pleasure we have in our

modest achieving. We come to it at the end of the study of some exalted and inspiring poetry, often with us "The Idylls of the King," always taking as a premise to such an attempt that the members of the class have shown a lively pleasure in and appreciation of what we have been reading before they attempt to mount the heights themselves.

Near the end of the study of the poem we take up meter in an informal way by discovering the rhythm in the children's names. Emma and Eugene, wide-eyed to discover that theirs are iambic and trochaic respectively, are interested observers of the dactylic and anapestic qualities of Clarabel and Eloise. The transition to the melodious association of several words comes naturally when we examine a number of names in full—Junietta Sharfenberger was a surprise even to herself—and we discover that middle names have in most cases been chosen with a view to linking the other two in a pleasing rhythm, tho surely the sponsors were quite unconscious of striving after metrical arrangement. This exercise is the first introduction most of the class have had to the idea that the words of our mother tongue are "made that way" and that the poet has linked words of one rhythm together, not however, as we hasten to assure ourselves, by the laborious method of eyeing each and stamping it iambic or trochaic as we have been doing with the names, but by letting the desired rhythm surge through his brain till his thoughts come in that meter. We prove that this is possible by putting lines on the board and taking turns copying them till all our minds are fairly a-sing in that beat. Then we examine the meter of the poetry we have been studying and touch on the fact that when a man becomes a master of rhythm he may allow his verse to vary in certain ways, and, in fact, gains a lightness here and a lilt there by doing so. All of this, before we so much as hint at attempting to write ourselves.

When I tell them that they are to write verse, be sure the news falls upon disturbed ears. But I hasten to assure them that everyone can do it, and then I prove it to the incredulous class by telling the story of the four sea-captains who decided to write an epitaph in verse for a dead friend. Each was to contribute a line. The first came out easily with,

"Here lies the captain of the sea."

The second had more or less difficulty but finally capped the line,

“Here lies him, here lies he.”

The third was well-nigh cornered and perspired freely before he finally added his contribution,

“Fiddle-de-dum, fiddle-de-dee.”

And the fourth finished triumphantly with,

“A B C D E F G.”

“So you see,” I feel justified in insisting, “everyone *can* write verse.”

Everyone looks relieved, each secretly recognizing his own ability to do better than that. “If that’s all you’re expecting,” each countenance assures me, “why, then the thing can be done.”

I go on to tell them that I don’t mean to leave them high and dry, groping for a beginning, but intend to follow the sea-captain’s plan and furnish them with a first line, or rather with many from which they may choose. They take the entire list at my dictation. Some of the ones I use came from the Appendix to Thomas’s *The Teaching of English in the Secondary School* where they were offered as self-starters for prose themes.

“I met a traveller from an antique land.”

“Over the hills and far away.”

“Little I ask, my wants are few.”

“A sight to dream of, not to tell.”

“Lord what fools these mortals be.”

“Quick, painter, quick, the moment seize.”

“My soul is an enchanted boat.”

“I had a dream I scarce can tell.”

“Tell me, thou star, whose wings of light.”

“Content to let the northwind roar.”

“The little gate was reached at last.”

At first the class fears the restraint of following a given line, but their first efforts prove that they gain by being assigned a definite rhythm and a more or less lofty and imaginative keynote. It will be observed that most of the assigned lines are of one rhythm, iambic tetrameter. Often the children try several beginnings before finally accepting one, and if they skip about from one meter to another, they are apt to become confused. If the class has other assignments in writing verse, it should have practice in trying other forms, without “self-starters.” I believe, however, that this

additional practice may well come as late as the senior year.

Long before the class attempts writing verse—when they first begin to write for me at all—I take up the idea that sincerity is *the one* imperative requirement in *all* writing without which all efforts are as dust and with which even the crudest and humblest expression has its value and its dignity. I lead them to see the unavoidable gulf that exists at the best between the *real thing* of which we write and our idea of it, and again between this idea and the inadequate words in which we must put it, and finally between those words and the idea the reader takes out of it, and so to the conclusion that unless the writer is sincerely trying to bridge that gulf, his work is a pitiful waste of time, bad for him and worthless to anyone who may read. Over and over again, as we write during the year, we come back to this base—that sincerity in writing means a real effort to put an actual idea on paper without losing any of it, and when this has been accomplished, it will be time to see how attractively we have been able to do it. (My own high-school themes were all efforts to write decoratively, so that I felt an innate conviction that theme-writing, while pleasant, was morally wrong, a primrose path, but leading to the everlasting bonfire. It wasn't till the ideal of perfect *sincerity* of expression took me by the scruff of the neck that I could think of writing without a painful consciousness that I ought to be about better business.)

When I give the assignment to write verse, I remind them that the demand for sincerity is as imperative in poetry as in prose and that they must not be satisfied unless their verse expresses something: it must never become a mere sequence of rather meaningless rhyming lines.

I like to end the assignment with a reminder that I expect a really whole-hearted attempt to do the best possible piece of work, and that the task will be hard, by quoting a stanza written by one of *my* classmates.

“And poesy's a lovely flower, delicately fair,
That blooms upon the field of leisure almost everywhere;
Yet must I many a weary hour labor and despair
Ere I may hope within my bower
To have it bloom as mine, this flower
That makes the broad fair fields of leisure fragrant everywhere.”

And if I have a class that shows unusual understanding,
I add the second stanza:

"And poesy's unstable pleasure, music in a dream;
Only buoyant bark may travel that Arcadian stream.
Such are wrought in loving travail, sail and keel and beam.
Cumbrous craft the rippling measure
Mar, and mire the sparkling treasure.
Barks of mine, hope you to travel down that mystic stream?"

Of course my assignment precedes its fulfillment by several days. During that time I announce myself as ready to lend a helping hand to anyone who brings in proof that he is working hard but is temporarily cornered. Sometimes a change of expression early in the stanza will clear the way for several lines where the thought refused to go before. If a child finds it impossible to produce anything in the way of verse, I quietly assign him a prose exercise, but as a general thing, buoyed up perhaps by the memory of the sea-captain's epitaph, all but one or two live up to the original requirement.

Correcting the papers is an adventure, as one catches here a ray of light and there the shadow—almost—of inspiration. One will have two splendid lines in the midst of an otherwise hopeless void; in another there will be something so revealing that I catch my breath over the glimpse of the depth of feeling masked by the plain little dark foreign face.

We follow the correcting with conferences in which the better ones are improved as much as may be, and the poorer are reviewed with the amused understanding between us that some of us do better to keep our feet on solid earth, but that it didn't do us any harm to try. The final best results are typed; one copy I keep, one goes to the writer, and a third to the contribution box of the school paper.

Among the pleasant surprises coming from such an exercise was this from a fifteen-year old apparently matter-of-fact boy whom "A sight to dream of, not to tell" had set to considering belief in fairies. The lines quoted were his last stanza.

A haystack may become a slide
For little boys with wings of gold,
A thimble just the place to hide
Or creep away when one is cold.
A plate becomes a dancing floor
Where fairies join hands in a ring
And dance to music and encore,
And as they dance they softly sing.

The "Oregon Trail" just finished in class furnished the idea for a second:

'Little I ask, my wants are few,'
Says the Indian as he takes some glue
And plasters it down on the top of his crown
And then adds vermilion, a paper or two.
'There's fish in the river, the game isn't wary,
The buffalo plenty, and often a berry;
So you see I can live and have plenty to give
On my own wide rolling prairie.'

The boy who loved to read gave me a little thrill when he put this love into verse:

Content to let the northwind roar
I stay within where all is bright
And though the storm beats out of door
I shall not feel his wrath tonight.

I sit me down in my easy chair
And toast my feet at the glowing fire.
Never I give the storm a care
Because I have my one desire.

My book to other climes doth lead;
With pirates bold I roam the sea,
I thrill at many a mighty deed,
And fight with clansmen on the lea.

And has not the author of the next and last a gift for compression which many a more experienced writer might envy?

I met a stranger from an antique land
A knight quite tall though pale
Who from his stamping steed seemed to command
Each brook, each hill, each vale.

He beckoned me to come into a cave
A way beyond the road;
He asked of me in voice so calm and grave
To clean his queer abode.

I came into a world of sleeping men;
He bade me have no fear.
I cleaned it well and then stepped from the glen.
I had been gone a year.

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